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Lucia A Keegan 10/18/2006 09:55:51 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 06836

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DISSEMINATION: POLOUT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 006836

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/17/2012
TAGS: [PREL](#) [FR](#) [RU](#) [EU](#) [GG](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: POLISH AMBASSADOR ON RUSSIA AND FRENCH/EU TIMIDITY
REF: WARSAW 2188

Classified By: Ambassador Craig Stapleton for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: In an October 13 meeting with the Ambassador, Polish Ambassador to France Jan Tombinski expressed concern about the increasing concentration of power in the Kremlin and criticized President Chirac for French reluctance to confront the Russians over their increasingly negative policies (e.g., on energy and defense). Poland had hoped for a stronger EU to balance Russian domination of Eastern Europe, but instead of coordinating with each other, each member-state is acting independently based on its own bilateral interests. According to Tombinski, the Poles would like to see a review of the current EU policy of viewing Russia as a strategic partner in addressing global issues; they believe that this policy has not brought the desired benefit of integrating Russia more into the international community or improving Russian internal policies on democracy and human rights. Finally, the recent Polish decision to be a part of the proposed missile defense system has met with immediate repercussions from Russia, which is now threatening to "reconsider" its own defense posture in response. End summary.

Russia as Autocratic Power

12. (C) Tombinski addressed a long list of concerns over growing Russian intransigence, beginning with Polish worries over the lack of transparency and the shift of decision-making authority from the Russian MFA to the Kremlin (and ultimately to Putin himself). Putin had announced several negative decisions (e.g., on energy and gas reserves) shortly after his visit to France, leading the Poles to suspect that Chirac "gave him the green light" to proceed without worrying about French criticism. Developments such

as the massing of Russian troops in Abkhazia, the recent assassination of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, Russian plans to redirect oil and gas supplies and the current tension between Georgia and Russia were all troubling signs of an increasingly arbitrary and autocratic regime. Tombinski noted that Russia has all the accoutrements of a global power, but it did not understand how to act like one without operating as an empire. According to him, Putin wanted to dominate neighboring countries as the easiest way to convey to the Russian public that their country was once again a superpower.

A Divided EU

13. (C) Tombinski said that Poland had hoped for a strong EU to balance Russian domination over Eastern Europe, noting that Poland and its neighbors were too weak to do so bilaterally, especially on energy and defense issues. Unfortunately, there had not been even a weak attempt to coordinate European positions on these critical issues. A case in point: just a week before the regular GAERC meeting of EU Foreign Ministers, the Finnish presidency had yet to circulate any common positions for discussion. Even worse, other European countries were all acting independently towards Russia, based on their own interests. Germany, for example, was pursuing a purely bilateral course with Russia; he claimed that in the recent meetings between Putin and Merkel, there had been virtually no discussion of "Europe."

14. (C) Tombinski said that Poland was pushing France and other European member-states to review the EU's current policy of considering Russia as a strategic partner on global issues (e.g., Iran, North Korea, Middle East Peace). Poland believed that the result of this policy had been much more favorable to Russia than to Europe. In retrospect, Europe had not derived the benefits it expected from trying to integrate Russia; instead Russian interests were used to override global interests, there had been little to no change in internal Russian policies, progress on democratization in Russia had lagged or gone in reverse, and there has been no progress in resolving several "frozen conflicts" where Russia could play a major role. The Poles wanted to help Russia to be a strong partner, but they did not share the assessment that involving Russia deeper in foreign policy issues would achieve this goal. In response, Ambassador Stapleton noted that Russia had a necessary role to play in addressing global conflicts. Many of these problems had ended in a referral to the United Nations Security Council where Russia is a permanent member with a right of veto; including the Russians in efforts to address these global issues was important.

Repercussions on Missile Defense

15. (C) Tombinski noted that the Polish President and PM had both visited Washington in September, during which a tentative decision had been reached to participate in the proposed missile defense system. This announcement, although largely supported by the public in Poland, had had an immediate negative effect on Polish relations with Russia. The Russians were now threatening to "reconsider" their own defensive posture vis--vis their western border, claiming that Polish participation in missile defense would alter the balance of defensive interests in Europe.

Comment

16. (C) Tombinski was clearly disappointed by what he considered to be the failure of the EU -- and France -- to take a harder line on Russia. Noteworthy was his suspicion of French complicity, active or passive, in Russian hardening. Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
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